



Ryedale District Council

REPORT TO: Policy and Resources Committee

DATE: 28 June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Commercial Services Manager
Phil Long

SUBJECT: Public Conveniences at Staxton Brow

WARDS AFFECTED: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

For Members to consider the options for Staxton Brow Public Conveniences

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Officers recommend **Option C**, i.e. that the current contractor be approached with a view to:

- An initial one-year trial from August 2007.
- The contractor undertaking cleaning of the public conveniences when trading on the car park.
- Determination of terms and conditions re hours opening hours.
- Determination of the trading season.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Staxton Brow Picnic Site is an attractive open space with far-reaching views across the Vale of Pickering and across to the East Coast. The Council invested a significant amount in developing the site in the early 1990's to provide an attraction for visitors to the area and for those travelling across the Wolds to the coastal resorts of Scarborough and Filey.

The site was developed in conjunction with the provision of toilet facilities, ensuring that visitors (generally on their way to the coast) had a useful facility when they stopped on their journey and also, with the letting of the contract for the sale of refreshments, an opportunity for refreshment and relaxation.

Though no hard data exists regarding usage, anecdotal information suggests that the facilities were well used, though highly seasonal, considering the remote location. However use was limited by comparison with others within Ryedale.

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In April 2005 the toilet block at Staxton Brow Picnic Site was closed, saving the costs of cleaning, water rates and business rates.

4.0 REPORT

Analysis of potential issues

Closure: Officers initially received correspondence and telephone calls from individuals, organisations, the refreshment operator on site and from Willerby Parish Council expressing concern at the closure and requesting that the facility be re-opened.

A consequence of the closure was that certain visitors to the site continued to use the site as a toilet, though generally problems have reduced over time once visitors recognised that the toilet block was closed.

If nothing is done with the existing building the closure will continue to raise issues in the public's mind:

- The building has been subject to vandalism.
- The building provides a degree of cover for people to use the back of it as a toilet.
- Visitors are likely to be more frustrated by the lack of toilet facilities while the building remains empty.

Asset Management: From an asset management view, the facility currently represents a surplus asset and should be disposed of. However it is unlikely that a sale could be easily achieved based on its present use:

- The location is remote.
- The range of alternative uses is potentially limited.
- The location has no electricity supply.
- The location has been subject to vandalism.
- Usage of the location is highly seasonal.

Re-opening: A number of potential issues should be considered if the facilities are to be re-opened. Due to the limited catchment area, remote location and the nature of the work, past experience indicates that local recruitment of a cleaner is difficult if not unlikely:

- Cleansing services could still be provided from Malton depot but travelling to site will incur new costs.

Initial interest has been expressed from the current refreshment provider in cleaning the toilets potentially free of charge, (subject to negotiation) on the basis that Ryedale provides cleaning materials and pays the rates, however:

- Opening times are likely to reflect trading times and could cause confusion regarding use.
- Materials would still need to be provided and transported from the depot.
- Amendment/renegotiation could be required of his existing contract.
- Another interested party (also wishing to provide refreshment services on the site) has expressed interest in cleaning the facilities but this option could only be explored once the current service provider's contract expires in 2008.

The facilities have now been closed for almost two years. A survey by Property Management indicates that initial remedial work will be required prior to opening:

- Door furniture and doors have been vandalised.
- Dampness has caused some degree of damage to worktop surfaces, which need to be repaired.
- A thorough deep cleanse is required throughout.
- Investigation will be required regarding the water systems and pipes etc for leaks once the water is turned on.
- Once the facility has been opened for a period of months and dried out, it will require redecoration.

Consideration could be given to the introduction of a self-cleaning unit (a Supa Loo) into the fabric of the existing building, however initial investigation suggests that costs in such a location would be extremely high, in addition:

- There is no electricity supply. This would need to be provided by wind turbine and solar panels however it is likely that this will not generate enough to power the unit.
- The wind turbine originally put in place for the facilities was stolen within a week of opening.

5.0 OPTIONS

A. Leave the facilities closed:

- The Asset Management Group should consider Sale of the Public Conveniences and/or of the whole site or an alternative use of the building be actively encouraged.
- If these options are not practicable consideration should be given to the building being demolished.

This option:

- Is cost effective and budget neutral once the building has been sold/demolished.
- Could result in a poor perception of Ryedale by the public.
- Visitors could continue to use the area as an 'open air' toilet though this would be less likely if the facility is removed or re utilised.

B. Open the facilities with cleansing provided from the depot:

- Total revenue costs, per annum would equate to £14,630 (estimated) inclusive of wages, travelling time, transport, materials and Business and Water rates. This cost could be reduced by £5400 per annum if it is possible to recruit locally.
- One off cost to refurbish facilities estimated at £3000.

This option

- Is an expensive option from a budget viewpoint.
- Is inefficient use of manpower due to travelling down time if labour cannot be recruited locally.
- Provides a reasonable amount of service provision for the public during peak seasonal use April to October.
- Gives a higher level of control over opening hours.

Costs have been based as follows:

- *Grade 3 operative*
- *Summer (Apr–Oct) 2 hours per day x twice daily x 7 days a week*
- *Winter (closed)*
- *Weekend hours at enhanced rates*
- *Travelling time one hour per cleanse i.e. 2 hours per day*
- *Water rates based on previous information*
- *Cleaning materials based on previous information*
- *Business rates based on previous information.*
- *Estimate of building works from Property Business Unit*

C. Investigate the potential of the existing refreshment contractor providing a cleansing service

- Total revenue costs, per annum equate to £2423 (estimated and subject to negotiation) inclusive of travelling time for transport of materials, inspection, cost of materials and Business and Water rates. *NB costs could vary depending on cleansing regime.*
- One off cost to refurbish facilities estimated at £3000.
- Opening times would need to be negotiated.
- Potentially there could be lost contract income if a cleansing service was provided of £300 per annum.

This option:

- Is the least expensive option if suitable terms can be negotiated although there would be on-going maintenance costs.
- Should ensure that the facility is open during peak demand and kept clean throughout the day, potentially to a higher standard as it can be achieved a 'little but often cleaning regime'.
- Has the potential for inconsistency from the public's point of view, as the facilities would not be open if the contractor is not trading. This could encourage open-air use of the back of the toilet.

D. Investigate the provision of a self-cleaning facility

- Though further work would be required, initial investigation indicates the provision of this type of facility could cost around an estimated £80,000 per annum plus £15,000 maintenance annually.
 - As mentioned above issues with the lack of an electric supply would need to be ratified to ascertain if this option is practicable.

This option:

- A very expensive initial cost and revenue costs
- Once in place this would supply excellent facility for the public.
- Lack of electric could be a major/expensive issue to resolve.
- The facility due to its remoteness could be subject to vandalism, which could further augment costs.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk is associated with two factors:

- Reputational risk associated with provision of poor or limited services.

- Financial Risk due to increased cost of service provision.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Though the use of Staxton brow Picnic area is highly seasonable, regular visitors undoubtedly viewed the closure of the toilet facilities as a great loss, which initially caused problems.

Though these have considerably reduced, resentment is likely to remain unless a decision is reached regarding either disposal of the asset or re-opening of the facility.

The location is remote and as such is both difficult and costly to access and maintain. The implementation of **Option C** subject to ratification of terms and conditions (on a one year trial basis) should ensure that services are provided in the most cost effective manner with the least amount of budget implication.

It should be noted that this option had been recommended by the Scrutiny Review of Public Conveniences February 2007 (Details of this report were included in the Appendix) and endorsed by CS&L 5 April 2007 and P&R 12 April 2007.

Background Papers:

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Phil Long, Commercial Services Manager, if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Ryedale House on ext. 477 or e-mail phil.long@ryedale.gov.uk.